An informa=

cion and Petition agaynst the oppressours of the poore Commons of thys Realme, compiled and Imprinted for this only purpose that amongest them that haue to doe in the Parliamente some godlye mynded men, may hereat take occation to speake more in the matter then the Authour was able to wryte.

¶ Esaye. lviii.

☞ When you suffre none oppression to be amongest you, and leaue of youre idel talke: then shal you cal vpon the Lord and he shal hear you, you shal cric, and he shall saye, Beholde I am at hande.

☞ Imprinted at London by John Daye, dwellyng in Sepulchres parish at the signe of the Resurrectiō a lytle aboue Holbourne Conduite.

☞ b ☜

Antonia

¶ To the most honorable Lordes of the Parliament wyth the commons of the same: theyr moste humble and dayly Oratour Robert Crowley, wisheth the assistēce of Goddes holy spirite.

AMonge the manifolde & moste weyghtie matters, (most worthy counsaylours) to be debated and cōmuned of in this present Parliamēt, and by the aduise, assent and consent therof spedily to be redressed: I thynke ther is no one thinge more needfull to be spoken of, then the greate oppression of the poore communes, by the possessioners as wel of ꝑ clergie as of ꝑ laitie. No doubt it is needfull, and ther ought to bee a spedy redresse of many matters of religion: as are these. The vse of the sacraments and ceremonies, the vsurping of tenthes to priuat commoditie, the superstitious, vnlerned, vndiscreet and vicious ministers of the church, and theyr Superstitious and Idolatrous administracions. Of these thynges I saye ought ther to be a spedy reformacīō. For they are now most lykly hastely to bringe vppon thys noble realme, the inuitable vengeaunce of God, iē they bee not shortly reformed: for as muche as it hath pleased the almyghty and lyuinge God, to open vnto vs those abhominacions, which haue heretofore ben kept secret and hyd from vs. These thinges, I say, are yet far out of ioynt, and had great nede to be reformed.

For notwithstandyng the Kinges maiesties

late visitation: the ignorant people, who haue longe ben fostred and brought vp in the superstition and wrong beleue of these thynges, and are yet no doubte, secretely instructed by their blinde guydes and by them holde styl in blindnes: wyll not be perswaded that theyr forfathers superstition was not the true fayth of Christe, til such tyme as they haue continuyng among them, such preachers as shal be able and wyll, by the manifeste scriptures proue vnto them that both they and their fathers were deceiued and knewe not how to worshyppe God aright, but shamfuly seduced by the couetise of the shepherdes and guides: sought him where he was not, and when they thought they had bene mooste byghe in his fauoure by doynge, hym suche honoure as they thought moste acceptable in hys syght: then cõmitted they most detestable blasphemie, & were abhominable before hym.

☞ Thys knowledge, I say, wyll not be beaten into the heades of the ignorante: so longe as theyr shepeherdes be but hyrlynges & folow luuynges, for such minister not to the cõgregation: but to theyr owne bealyes. They are not shepeherdes, but butchars. They come not to feede, but to be fed. And doubtles (most christen coũsaylours) I thinke it not possible to amẽde this great enormitie, otherwyse then by reducynge the order of choosynge of the ministers, vnto the order that was in ỹ primitiue church wherof is mẽtioned in the Act. of the Apostles. Actu. 1. For solong as vyle bealies may come to the by shope and be smered for money, God shal saye to thẽ by his prophet. Jere. 23. You did rẽne but I sent

you

you not. They shalle be called feedars, of feedynge them selues and not of fedyng the flocke. They shal studye to please men: not to please God. In fine, they shall differ nothynge from the craftes men whiche applye an occupacion to gette theyr lyuinge vppon, and not to the intent to profite the common weale.

☞ The craftes man sueth for the fredom of a Citie, not because he intendeth to be a maintainer of the Citie: but because he hopeth that he shall lyue so muche the more welthyly hym selfe. And euē for lyke causes do our ministers and are lyke styll to do (so longe as they maye bee receyued when they come vncalled) applye them selues to preesting, because they lyke wel the ydlenes of the lyfe.

☞ I doubt not but the kynges maiesties visitters know more of thys matter then I cā be able to wryte. And by thē, I doubt not, you shal be moued to cōmune of this mattier at the full.

☞ The sacramentes they styl abuse, vsynge them as matters of merchaundyce, and chiefly the most worthy memory of our redēption, for that they selle boethe to the quycke and to the deade, to the ryche and to the poore. None shall receyue it at theyr handes, wythout he wyll paye the ordinarie shotte, and so are they redy to serue euery man. They loke vpō the monet onely and nothynge vppon the mynde. Whether it be taken to cōfort of conscience or iudgemēt, they pas not. Thei tel the monet, thei loke for nomore. If they wyll deny this to bee true let them saye why they suffer the poore to begge money to paye for theyr housel, as they call it. Perchaunce they wyll answer that the money

is not payede for the sacrament, but for the.iiii. offeryng dayes. Then aske I thys question, Why thei appoint not another time to receiue it in, then that tyme whyche is to lyttle to bee occupied in declareynge to the people the right vse & profyte of the sacramentes, & to instructe them so, þ they do not receiue it to theyr iudgment, but to theyr comfort and quietnes of conscience, for which purpose it was first instituted. Undoubtedli (most christiā counsailours) they can not deni but that they appoynt to receyue it then, because they wil be sure of it. Theyr doeynges wyll declare it, thoughe they wouldē deny it, for none may receyue the sacramentes vnles he do fyrste paye the money. And then, wyth how lyttle reuerence it is ministred and receyued: euery christen hert seeth & lamenteth.

These thinges (I doubt not) are so euident and playne vnto you: that it nedeth not to troble you wyth manye wordes concerneinge the abuses therof. Many godly mmded men haue boeth written and preached, & do daiely writte and preach, of and agaynst those abuses, wherfore I am certen that you haue iuste occasion and can do no lesse but seke a furder redres her of (whyche al christen hertes do desire) in thys present parliament.

But as for the oppression of the pore, which is no lesse needful to be cōmuned of and reformed then the other: I feare me wyll bee passed ouer with silence, or if it bee communed of, I cānne scarcely truste that any reformacion cānne bee had, vnlesse God do nowe worke in the hertes of the possessioners of thys realme, as he dyd

in the primitiue church, when the possessioners were contented and very wyllyng, to sell theyr possessions and geue ꝑ price therof to be commune to al the faythful beleuers. Take me not here that I shoulde go about by these wordes to perswade men to make all thinges cōmune: for if you do you mistake me. For I take God to wytnes I meane no such thyng. But with all myne hert I wouldе wysh that no mā were suffered to eate, but such as would laboure in theyr vocation and callyng, accordynge to the rule that Paule gaue to the Thessalonians. 2 Thes. 3
But yet I wouldе wysh that the possessioners wouldе consyder whoe gaue them theyr possessions, and howe they ought to bestowe them. And then (I doubt not) it shouldе not nede to haue all thynges made commune.

☞ For what nedeth it the seruauntes of the householde to desyre to haue theyr maysters goodes cōmune, so longe as the stuarde ministreth vnto euery man the thinge that is nedefull for hym:

☞ If the possessioners wouldе consyder thē selues to be but stuardes, and not Lordes ouer theyr possessions: thys oppression wouldе sone be redressed. But so longe as thys perswasion stycketh in theyr myndes. It is myne owne.
Whoe shal warne me to do wyth myne owne as me selfe lysteth: it shall not bee possible to haue any redresse at all. For if I may do wyth myne owne as me lysteth: then maye I suffer my brother, hys wyfe and hys chyldrene, to lye in the strete, excepte he wyll geue me more rent for myne house thē euer he shal be able to paye. Then may I take his goods for that he oweth

me and kepe his body in priſon, tournyng out his wyfe and chyldren to perſhe, if God wyll not moue ſome mans herte to pitie them: and yet kepe my coffers full of goulde and ſyluer.

☞ If ther were no god, then would I think it leafull for men to vſe their poſſeſſiõs as thei liſte. Or if God woulde not requitre an accõpt of vs for the beſtoweynge of them. I woulde not greately gaynſaye thoughe they toke their pleaſure of them whyle they lyued here. But foraſmuch as we haue a God, and he hath declared vnto vs by ẏ ſcriptures, ẏ he hath made the poſſeſſioners but Stuardes of his ryches and that he wyl holde a ſtreyght accompt with them for the occupiynge and beſtoweynge of them: I thynke no chriſtian eares can abyde to heare that more then Turkyſh opinion.

☞ The Philoſophers who knewe nothyng of the bonde of frendſhippe which Chriſte our mayſter and redemer lefte amonge vs: affirmed that among frẽdes al thinges are cõmune meaneyng that frendſhippe woulde not ſuffer one frende to holde frome an other, the thinge that he hath neede of. And what ſhal we ſaye? Are we not frẽdes? Suerly if we be not frendes: wee beare the name of Chriſte and bee called chriſtians in vayne. Yea if wee haue not a more perfecte frendeſhyppe then that whereof the Philoſophers ſpeake: wee are but fayned chriſtians we beare the name onely and are no thynge leſſe in dede. For this is the token that Chriſte gaue whereby wee ſhoulde be knowen to be of him: if we loue one an other as he loued vs. Howe he loued vs, is declared by the wordes of the Apoſtle ſayinge, that Chriſte

Iohn.13.

Epheſ.5.

gaue

gaue hym selfe for vs. Accordynge to thys exemple ought our frendshyp to be such, that we wyll not spare to spende our lyfe for the welth of our brothers. Not to fyght in theyr quarell (for Christe bade Peter put vp the swerde into his place) but to teach the truth boldly with out any feare of death, and not to suffer oure brothers to bee led in erroure thoughe present death shoulde insue for so doynge.

Some perchaunce wyll thynke that this frendshyp is to be vnderstande onely of the pastors and shepherdes towarde theyr flocke because Christ sayth that a good shepherde geueth his lyfe for his shepe. Forsoeth if the pastours or shepeherdes onely, were the flocke of Christe then myght thys frendeshyp ryght well be vnderstanded of them onely. But for asmuch as the laie and priuate persons, are as wel of the flocke of Christe as the other: thys frendeshyp parteineth vnto them nolesse then to the other. And thys causeth me (moste worthy counsaylours) not to feare the displeasure of men in this behalfe, knoweynge for certentie that the greateste numbre of thys assemble are not free from this oppression that I speak of, and that it is farre vnlyke that a priuate persone by no meanes worthy to be called to suche an assemble shoulde be fauourably heard and accepted of them whom God hath called to be counsaylours of a realme, and chiefly in a cause tayng + blameyng the Iudges before whom it is pleaded. I might well conjecte wyth my selfe, that I shoulde in this poynte be counted a busy body, and one that renneth before he is sent. But I am redi to suffer not onli al such report

John. 10.

but

but euen the verye death also (if it shall please the almightie and everlyueynge God to laye it vpon me) for youre sakes, moste worthy counsailours, and the residue, my natural brothers of this noble realme.

¶ And here I protestе vnto you all, that the same spirite that sent Jonas to the Niniuits, Daniel to the Babilonians, Nathan to kyng Dauid, Achior vnto Holofernes, Judith vnto the Priestes and Elders of the Jewes, the prophete to Jeroboam in Bethel, John the Baptist vnto Herode, and Christ vnto the Jewes-
Esai.58. wytnesseth wyth my conscience, that I renne not vnsent. For euē the same spirite that sayd vnto Esaye, crye and cease not, declare vnto my people theyr wyckednes: cryeth also in my conscience. bydyng me not spare to tell the possessioners of thys realme, that vnlesse they repente the oppression wherewyth they vexe the poore cōmōs, and shew thēselues thorough loue to be brothers of one father & membres of one body wyth them: they shal not at the laste daye enherite wyth them the kingdome of Christ ỹ eldest sonne of God the father, whych hath by his worde begotten hym many brothers & coheritours is hys kingdom Vnlesse, I saye, the possessioners of thys realme wyl repent the violence don to the poore and nedy mēbres of the same, and become as handes, ministring vnto euery membre his necessaryes: they shall at the daye of theyr accompt, be bound hand and fote and cast into vtter darknes, wher shal be wepyng, wealyng, and gnashyng of teeth, that is, dolour and payne, the greatnes wherof canne not be expressed wyth tonge nor thought wyth herte.

herte. And thys much more sayeth the spirite. Vnlesse ye purge your selues of thys bloude, & stop the mouthes of the poore that the voyce of theyr complaynt come not vnto mine eares: I wyll not prosperе your counsayles in the reformacio of those abhominacios which I shewed vnto you, but wyll leaue you to ꝑ spirite of errour, ꝑ prince of thys worlde, whose dearlinges ye are so longe as ye seke not the welth of the nedy, but your owne priuate commodite. These thynges hath the spirite of God spoke. Heauen and earth shal perishe, but the wordes of the spirite shall not perish, but be fulfylled. Nowe herken you possessioners, and you rich men lifte vp your eares, ye stuards of the Lord marke what complayntes are layede agaynste you in the high courte of the liuynge God. Lorde (sayeth the Prophete) hast thou forsaken vs? doest thou hide thy selfe in the tyme of our trouble? Whylse the wicked waxe proude the poore man is afflicted and troubled. Would to God the wicked myght seale the same thinges that they inuent for other. For the sinnere prayseth hym selfe in the desyers of hys soule, and he extolleth and setteth furth the couetouse man. He prouoketh the Lorde and is so proud that he wyll not seke hym. He neuer thynketh vpon God. His wayes be defiled at all tymes. He loketh not vpon thy iugementes Lorde, be will reuenge hym vpon al hys enimies. He thynketh thus with hym selfe, I wyll not remoue from one generacion vnto an other without mischefe. Hys mouth is full of malediction and euill repute, fraude & deceyte: and vnder his tonge is affliction and iniquitye. Esai. 59.

He

He lyeth in wayte wyth the rychemen of the villages or graynges, in ſecrete corners, to the intent to ſlea the innocent. His eyes are fyxed vpon the poore, he layeth awayete, euen as a lyon in his denne. He layeth a wayte to take the poore man by force, and when he hath gotten him wythin his reache, then wyll he take hym violentlye. In hys net will he ouerthrowe the poore, and through hys ſtrength ſhall the multitude of the oppreſſed be ouer charged and fall. For in his hert he ſayeth, God hath forgotten God turneth a waye hys face, and wyll neuer regarde the oppreſſion of the poore. etc. to the ende of the ſame Pſalme.

¶ What ſentence (thinke you) will the Lorde gyue vpō this euidence? No doubt (moſt worthy counſellers) euen the ſame that we reade in Eſaie the Prophete. I loked for iudgement and righteouſe dealynge amongeſte my people and beholde there is iniquitie, I loked alſo for iuſtice, and beholde there is an outcrye. Wo be vnto you therefore, that do ioyne houſe vnto houſe, & couple one fielde to an other, ſo longe as there is any ground to be had. Thinke you that you ſhal dwel vpon the earth alone? The Lorde of hoſtes ſayeth the prophete, hath ſpoken theſe wordes vnto me. Many large and goodlye houſes, ſhall be deſerte, and wythout inhabitauntes. x. acres of vynes ſhal yelde but one quarte of wyne, and. xxx. buſhelles of ſeede ſhall yelde but iii buſhelles agayne. Beholde you engroſſers of fermes, and tenements be holde I ſay, the terrible threatnynges of God whoſe wrath you can not eſcape. The voyce of the poore (whō you haue with money thruſte

Eſaie. 5.

out

out of house and home, is well accepted in the eares of the Lorde, and hath steared vp hys wrath agaynste you. He threateneth you moste horrible plages. Ten acres of vynes shal yelde but one quarte of wyne, and. xxx. bushelles of sede but. iii. bushelles agayn. The sede of Gods worde sowen in youre hertes, shalbe barrayne and not bringeforth fruite.

☞ For couetyse, the rote of al euelles, occupieth that grounde so that the heauenlie sede can by no meanes geue encrease. This is a plage of al plages most horryble And doubt ye not you lease mongres, that take grounde by lease to the intente to lette them out agayne for double and triple, the rent: your parte is in this plage The Lorde shall take his spirite from you. He shall forbyd the cloudes of his mercy, to rayne vpon you wyth the swete dwe of hys greace. And you surueighers of lãdes, that of x. li. lãde can make. xx. you shall not be forgotten in the effusion of thys plage.

☞ For whẽ you haue multiplied your rẽttes to the highest, so that ye haue made all youre tenantes your slaues to labour and toyle and bringe to you all that maye be plowed and digged out of youre groundes: then shal death sodaynly strike you, then shall God wythdrawe his comfortable greace from you, thẽ shall your conscience pricke you, then shall you thynke with desperat Cain, that your sinne is greater thẽ that it may be forgeuen. For your owne cõscience shall iudge you worthye no mercye, because you haue shewed no merci. Yea the same enimie that hath kendled, and doeth yet maynteyne in you thys mischeuous, outragious and

and vnsaciable couetousnes: shall then bee as busy to put you in mynde of the wordes of Christ saienge, ꝓ same measure that you haue made vnto other, shalbe nowe made vnto you.

You haue shewed no mercye: howe can you than loke for mercye? Oh noble counsailours be mercyful to your selues. Destroye not your owne soules to enriche your heyres. Enlarge not your earthly possession wyth the losse of the eternal enheritaunce. Learne to knowe the estate that God hath called you vnto, & to lyue accordinge to your profession, Knowe that you are al ministres in the common weale and that the portion which you are borne vnto, or that your prince geueth you is your estate. Knowe that your office is to distribute & not to scrape to gether on heapes, God hath not sette you to surueye his landes, but to playe the stuardes in hys householde of this world, and to se that your poze fellow seruantes lacke not theyr necessaries.

Consider that you are but ministers and seruauntes vnder the Lorde oure God, and that you shal render a streyght accompt of your administracion. Stand not to much in your own conceyte, glorynge in the worthynesse of your bloude, for we are all one mans chyldren, and haue (by nature) lyke right to the ryches and treasures of thys worlde wherof oure natural father Adame was made Lord and Kinge. Whiche of you can laye for hym selfe any naturall cause whye he shoulde possesse the treasure of this worlde, but ꝓ the same cause maye be founde in hym also whome you make your slaue? By nature (therefore) you can claime no

thynge

thinge but that which you shall gette wyth the swet of your faces. That you are Lordes and gouernoures therfore, commeth not by nature but by the ordinaunce & appoyntment of God. Knowe then that he hath not called you to the welth and glorie of this worlde: but hath charged you wyth the greate and rude multitude.

And if any of them perishe thorowe your default, knowe the for certentie, that the blonde of them shalbe required at your handes. If the impotent creatures perishe for lacke of necessaries: you are the murderres, for you haue theyr enheritaunce and do not minister vnto them. Ezech.33

If the sturdye fall to stealing, robbyng & reuenge: then are you the causers therof, for you dygge in, enclose, and withholde from them the earth out of the which they shoulde digge and plowe theyr lyuenge. For as the Psalmiste Psal.115 writeth. All the heauen is the Lordes: but as for the earth hee hath geuen to the childrene of men.

☞ The whole earth therfor (by birth ryght) belongeth to the chyldren of men. They are all inheritours thereof indifferently by nature

But because the sturry shoulde not oppresse the weake and impotent: God hath apoynted you stuards to geue meate vnto his housholde in due season. And if you be founde faythfull in thys litel: then knowe that he wyll preferre you to muche greater thynges. But if ye bee found oppressing your felowe seruauntes: the knowe for certentie, that the Lorde your master shall at hys comeynge, rewarde you wyth many strypes. Call to your remembraunce the Luke.12.

hystory of Kynge Nabuchodonosor whoe for Dani.4.

hys

his preſumption became, as a brute beaſt, feadinge vpō graſſe and hey as other beaſtes dyd.

☞ Conſidre Pharao wyth his great armie, whom the Lorde ouerwhelmed in the red ſea for oppreſſing and perſecuting his people. Yea conſidre all the nobilitie that haue poſſeſſed the earth, euen from the begynnyng: and then ſaye howe you be theyr ſucceſſours, and by what title you cleyme that which was theyrs.

☞ Many hundred yeres ſence, the noble Romains helde all Europa, and parte of Affrike and Aſia, in quiete poſſeſſion: and where are they that ſucceade them in theyr impeir?

The brutiſhe Gothes inuaded and vāquiſhed the impier of Rome: and where are theyr ſucceſſours?

☞ What ſhoulde I ſtande in the rehearſall of the great poſſeſſioners that haue heretofore poſſeſſed the earth, whoſe iniiall deſcent cā not be founde? It ſhal ſuffice me to remitte you to the wordes of the Lorde vnto Nabuchodonoſor, whiche are wrytten in the boke of Daniell the Prophet.

Dani. 4.

☞ There ſhal you learne that it is God that gyueth the impier to whō it pleaſeth hym, and that all power is from aboue, accordynge to the anſwer that our ſauiour Chriſte made vnto Pilate, when he bragged hym wyth the power than he had to crucifie hym and to deliuer hym. Thou ſhouldeſt, ſayed our ſauiour, haue no power ouer me at all, were it not gyuen the from aboue.

Iohn. 19.

☞ Thus it is euident vnto you (moſte worthy counſaylours) that youe power and eſtāte cometh frome aboue, and that by nature, you

can

can cleyme nothynge of the possessions of thys worlde, more then that whiche you gette wyth the swet of your faces.

☞I doubt not therfor but that your consciences do condescend and agre vnto that which I haue spoken concernynge youre office and ministerie, knoweynge that God hath appointed you to minister necessaries to the impotent and to defende the innocent.

☞Do not therfore neglect thys principalle poynt of your dutie, to seke in this parliament a redresse of thys great oppression, wherwyth the poore membres of this noble realme, ar most vnmercifully vexed on euery syde.

☞The lande lordes for theyr partes, survey and make the vttermost peny of al their grounds, beysydes the vnreasonable fynes and incomes. And he that wyl not or can not geue all that they demaunde: shall not enter be he neuer so honest or stande he neuer so greate neede.

☞Yea though he haue ben an honest, true, faythfull and quiete tenant many yeres: yet at the vacatiō of his Copie or Iudentur, he must paye welnoste as much as woulde purchayse so much grownde or else voide in haste, though he, his wyfe and childrene, shoulde perisshe for lacke of harbour.

☞What a sea of mischikes hath flowed out of thys more then Turkysshe tyrānie: what honeste houseolders haue ben made folowers of other not so honest mens tables: what honeste matrones haue ben brought to the needy rocke and cardes: what menchyldrens of good hope in the liberall sciences and other honeste qualities (wherof this realme hath great lacke) haue

ben compelled to fal ſome to handycrafts and ſome to daye labour to ſuſtayne theyr parents decrepet age and miſerable pouertie: what frō ward and ſtoubourne childꝛen haue herby ſha-ken of the yoke of godly chaſtiſement rennyng hedlonge into all kyndes of wickednes and fi-nally garnyſhed galowe trees: what modeſte, chaſt and womanly virgins, haue for lacke of dourie bene compelled either to paſſe ouer the dayes of their youth in vngrate ſeruitude, oꝛ els to marꝛy to perpetuall miſerable pouertie: what immodeſte, & wanton gyrles haue hereby bene made ſiſters of the Banke the ſtumlyng-ſtocke of all fraile youth) and finally, moſt mi-ſerable creatures lyinge and dyinge in the ſtre-tes full of all plages and penurie: what vni-uerſall deſtruction chaunceth to thys noble re-alme by thys outragious and vnſaciable de-ſire of the ſurueiers of landes: I repoꝛte me to you (moſte chriſtian counſellours) whiche are here aſſembled from all partes of thys noble realme, to conſult foꝛ the wealth of all the mē-bꝛes of the ſame.

☞ On the other ſyde, there be certeyne te-nauntes, not able to be lande Loꝛdes, and yet after a ſoꝛt they cōter faite lande loꝛdes, by ob-teſninge leaſes in and vpon groſſides and tene-mentes, and ſo reyſe fines, incomes, & rentes: and by ſuch pillage pike out a portion to main teyne a pꝛoude poꝛt, and all by pilling and pol-ling of the pooꝛe commons that muſt of neceſ-ſitie ſeeke habitations at theyꝛ handes.

☞ That this is true, I repoꝛt me to my loꝛde the Maire & other the heade officers of the Ci-tie of London, who (if they be not ignoꝛant of

the

the state of the Citie can witnes with me that the moste parte, yea I thinke .ix. of the .x. partes, of the houses in London, bee set and let by them that haue them by lease: and not by the owners.

☞ Howe thei polle the poze tenãtes, would sone be tryed, if theyz leases were conferred wᵗ theyz rentrolles. It is not to be thought contrary but that the greate leasmũgers haue greate gains by their leases, foz the litleons that hold but a piece of houseing of .xx. oz .xxx. s. by yere: can kynde the meanes to holde and dwell vpon the chiefe parte therof rent fre, by letynge out the residue foz the whole yerely rent.

☞ I thinke not contrary but these thinges do appeare in the syght of many to bee but verey trifles. and not wozthy to be spokẽ of in so noble an assemble as this most honorable parliament. Foz they are no mattiers concerneyng the welth of the nobilitie, yea it is rather hyndrance to many of them, to haue these thynges redzessed, then any encrease of theyz welth. Yea euen you (moste christian counsaylours) whych are here assembled, to debate the weighty mattiers of thys realme: are not all so free from this kynde of oppzession, but that you coulde be well contented to wynche at it. And therfoz, foz asmuche as the inozdinate loue of men towarde them selues is such, that eyther they can not se theyz owne faults, oz else if they do se them, oz be tolde of them, they take them not to be so great as they are in dede: I thinke it no meruayle, though such of you (most wozthy counsaylours) as haue any profite by this oppzession, do wythin them selues deride and

laugh to scorne my fole hardines and rashe interprise herein, knowyng that it is not the vse of them that be assembled to the intent to establishe suche thynges as shall be for the wealth of a whole realme: to condescende and agree to those thynges whiche shall be disprofitable vnto the chiefe membres of the same.

☞ Truth it is (moste worthy counsaylours) I might well and worthely be laughed at: if I woulde attempt any such thing. But the thing that hytherto I haue spoken of: is not to the disprofite of any, but to the great commoditie and profite of all the whole realme.

☞ For what discōmoditie is it to the heade, shoulders, the armes, and other the vpper mēbres of the bodie, beinge already sufficiently clothed: to put on the legges and feete a peare of hose and shoes, to defende them also from the iniuries of the wether & other hurtes that myght chaunce vnto them in theyr trauayling to cary the body from place to place, for his cōmoditie and pleasure? Verely in myne opinion that body is farre vnworthy to haue either legges or feete: that wyll let them go bare, hauyng wherwith to couer them.

☞ Euen so you, beynge the chiefe membres of thys noble realme, and hauing in your handes the wonderful and incomperable riches of the same: what shoulde it greue you to departe wyth some portion thereof, that the inferioure membres thereof, maye at all tymes be able to do theyr ministerie and office accordyngly.

☞ Once remembre, that as the bodye wyth out the inferioure partes is but lame and as a blocke vnweldy, and muste, if it wyll remoue

from

from place to place, creepe vpon the handes: euen so you, if ye had not the poore membre of this realme to tyll the grounde and do your other drudgery: no remedy you muste needes do it your selues.

☞ Use them therfore as the necessarie membres of the misticall bodye of this moste noble realme, and be not in thys poynte more vnnatural then the heathen Philosophers were.

They in theyr wrytynges declare no lesse then I haue wrytten.

☞ Thys oughte not a lytle to move you, being christians (whose redemer Iesu Christ sitteth at the eyghte hande of God his father) to study, not onely to be equal with, but to passe the heathen: vnchristened in this matter, euen as farre as the excellencie of the name and religion whiche we profesſe, passeth theyrs.

☞ Remembre (most christian counsaylours) that you are not only naturall membres of one body wyth the poore creatures of this realme: but also by religion you are membres of the same misticall body of Christ, who is the head of vs all (his membres) and estemeth all that is done to the leste of vs his membres, as done to hym selfe. For he sayth.

☞ What so euer ye do to the leste of these litleones that beleue in me: ye do it vnto me. Mat. 25.

If you therefore, neither wyll your selues oppresse our sauiour Christe in his membres, nor suffre other to do it: fayle not to fynde a redres of this greate oppression, whiche I haue declared to the same ende. And thē I doubt not, but God shall so worke wyth you: that euery man shall wyllyngly embrace a reformation of all

matters of religiõ. For the ſpirit of God ſhall dwell in you and in vs all, and Chriſte himſelf (as he hath promiſed) ſhall bee in the myddes amonge you. Wher as contrariwiſe, if you ſuffer our loueinge ſauiour thus to be oppreſſed, he wyll forſake you, he wyll leaue you to the ſpirite of errour. Your reformacions ſhal take no place. All your diuiſes ſhall be abhominable in his ſyght, becauſe ye haue not purged your handes from the bloude of this oppreſſion.

Let the decres whych were eſtablyſhed in thys place by a parliament aſſembled for a lyke purpoſe: be your preſidẽt, not to folow, but to beware by them that ye eſtabliſh not the lyke.

The intent of that aſſemble was noleſſe to reſourm the abuſes of our religion then thye is. But becauſe Chriſte was not deliuered frome oppreſſion: he woulde not be amonge them.

They were not congregated in hys name, but rather agaynſte hym and hys doctrine, for he hym ſelfe is dear loue, & (as his Apoſtle John
1. Epiſt. 4. writeth) wher this dear loue is not, ther is not he. Thys thynge is well proued by theyr proceadynges in the ſame Parliament. For they eſtabliſhed articles euen directly agaynſt Gods worde forbedynge to mary, and cõmaundynge to put aſunder thoſe that God hath ioyned to gether

☞ If you wyll call theſe articles into queſtion agayne (as in dede you haue iuſte occaſion to do) I doubt not but you ſhal be fully perſwaded that they proceaded of the ſpirit of erroure and not of the ſpirite of God, becauſe the charitie of God was not amonge them in that aſſemble.

Other

Other thynges therbe whereby the poze mẽbres of Chriſte in thys noble realme, are oppreſſed, wherof I haue made no mention, partely becauſe I am loth to offende wyth the multitude of my rude wordes, & partely for that I know you can not ſeke for a redres of theſe thynges wherof I haue ſpoken: but the other wil offer them ſelues vnto you. I meane the greate Extortion and Vſurie that reigneth freely in thys realme, and ſeme to be authoriſed by Parliament wythin theſe .iii. yeres laſte paſte.

☞ The Cleargie of the Citie of London, haue for theyr parte optayned by Parliament, authoritie to ouer tẽthes euen after the exẽple of the landlordes and leaſemongers, and maye by the vertue of the acte require for double rentes, double tenthes. If the rent of any kynde of houſyng or groũde wythin the Citie of Lõdon be raiſed (as ther is in dede veri much) frõ x.s. to xx.s: than may the perſone (whoe had be fore but xvi.d.ob.) by the vertu of this act, demaunde xx.ii.s.ix.d, the double. Beſydes this, the exactions that they take of the poze cõmons, is to much beyonde al reaſon and conſcience. No couple cã be maried, but theſe mẽ muſt haue a dutie, as the call it. No woman may be purified, but they and theyr ydle miniſters muſt haue ſome duties of hir. None cã be buried but they wyll haue a fliese. Not three monethes before the beginning of this preſẽt Parliamẽt: I had iuſt occaſion to be at the paymẽt of this dutie for ỹ burying of an honeſt poze mã, whoſe frẽdes were wylling to haue his body reuerendly laied in the ground, & according to the cuſtome, gaue warninge to the curate that they woulde

bryuge the deade body to the churche: desiryng him that he would do his dutie and to be there to receyue it, and accordyng to the custome, to laye it in the grounde. But thys Rauen smellyng the carion: coulde not but reuelle it to the other carion byrdes of the same church, and so wouldē needes come all together in a flocke to fetche theyr praye, wyth crosse and holy water as they were wonte to do, notwythstandynge the kynges Iniunctions and late visitation. The frendes of the deade man refused al thys and required to haue no more but the cōmune cosken to put the body in, agreynge to paye to the keeper therof his accustomed dutie, and in lyke maner to the graue maker, and the foure poore men to cary the bodye, so that the whole charges had ben but. vii. d.

☞ But when the corps was buried, wythout other crosse or holy water stycke, Dirige, or Masse, with prayers of as smal deuotion, as any pore curate could say, yet must we needes paye. vii. d. more That is to saye. i. d. to the curate, whiche he called an heade peny, and. vi. d. to. ii. clerkes that we had no neede of.

☞ Thys was done in Sepulchres parishe in the Citie of London. And if it shall please any of this noble assemble to trye the truth of this: I wyl verifie it where so euer I shal be called, euen in the presence of all the ydle ministers of the same churche.

☞ This haue I written (moste worthy counsailours) to gyue you an occasiō to set such an order in thys and suche other thynges, that either we may haue ministers founde vppon the tithes that we paie yerli to the churches: other

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els that it maye be leaful for vs to do such ministeries our selues, and not to be thus cõstrained to feede a sorte of carion crowes, whiche are neuer so mery as when we lament the losse of our frendes.

☞ Thys muche haue I spoken of the extortion that reygneth frely in the Clergie. Nowe, wyth your pacience, I wyl with like breuitie, speake of the great & intollerable vsurie, which at this date, reigneth so frely this realme ouer al, and chiefely in the Citie of London: that it is taken for moste leaful gaines. Yea it is welmoste hereste to reproue it, for men say it is alowed by Parliament. Mel. The most part, I am sure, of this most Godly assemble and parliamẽt: do knowe that the occasion of the acte that passed here cõcerning Vsurie: was the vnsaciable desire of the vsurers, who coulde not be cõtẽted with Vsurie, vnlesse it were vnreasonable much. To restrayne this gredy desire of theirs therfore, it was cõmuned and agreed vpõ, and by the authoritie of Parliament, decreed: that none should take aboue .x.li. by yere for the lone of an .C.li.

☞ Alas that euer any christiã assẽble should be so voied of gods holy spirite, þ they should alowe for leaful: any thynge that Gods word forbiddeth, We not abashed (most worthy counsaylours) to cal this acte into question againe. Scan the wordes of the Psalmist concerning this matter, Lorde, sayth he, who shal enter into thy tabernacle, and who shal rest in thy holy mountaine? he answereth. That entreth without spot & worketh ryght. That speaketh truth in his hert, & hath not deceiued wt his tonge, that

hath

hath done his neighbour ho harme, nor accepted any reproche against his neighbour. He regardeth not the wicked: but thē that feare the Lorde, he glorifieth & praiseth. He þ sweareth to his neighbour & deceyueth hym not. He þ hath not giuē his money vnto vsurie, & hath not taken gyftes & rewardes agaynst the innocent.

☞ If yon (moste christian counsaylours) do glorie in the knowledge of Gods spirite, who hath spokē these wordes by the prophet: howe can you suffre this acte to stande which shalbe a witnes against you in the later day, that you alowe that, which Goddes spirite forbiddeth?

☞ If he that geueth not his mouey to Vsurie: shal dwell in the Lordes tabernacle: where shal he dwel that giueth his money to Vsury? shal he not be shutte out & cast into vtter darknes? Their workes be contrary, & why should not their rewarde be also contrary? If the one be receyued in: the other must be shut out. Yea and you that haue made this lawe, vnlesse you do reuoke it and establysh an act to the contrary: the Bydegroume, the onely sonne of God, shal at the laste daye deny you and saye that he
Wath. 7. neuer knewe you. Depart frō me, shal he saye, al ye workers yf iniquitte. Scanne the wordes of the Prophete therfore, and scanne the wordes of oure sauioure Christe also, in the .vi. of Luke, where he sayeth thus. Do you lende lokynge for no gaynes therof, and your rewarde shalbe plentuous, and you shalbe sonnes of the highest, bicause he is gentle & liberall, towarde the vnthankful and wicked.

☞ I am not ignorannte what Glosses haue ben made vpon this place, and howe men haue wrested

wrested & made it no precept, but a counsaile of our sauiour, & therfore not to infer necessitie to christians but to leaue them at libertie either to do it or leaue it vndone.

☞ Oh mercifull Lorde, what maner of religion is it that these men professe?

☞ They boast them selues to bee the disciples of Christe and setters forthe of his glorie.

☞ They wyll beare the name of hym and be called christians, and yet wylbe at libertie to chose whether they luste, to folowe hys counsayle or leaue it vndone.

☞ Our shepherd Christe, of whose flocke they boaste them selues to bee, sayeth that hys sheepe heare his voyce and folowe hym. And immediatly before, he sheweth, the cause why the Jewes dyd not credyt hys wordes, to be none other: but that they wer not his shepe. John. 10

☞ And doubte ye not (moste worthy counsaylours) what so euer he is that wyll defende or teach, that any one lytle iote of the counsayles of Christ shoulde be so vaynly spoken that any of hys flocke myght refuse to practise the same in hys lyuynge to the vttermoste of hys power: is nolesse then a membre of the Deuell, and a verey Antichriste.

☞ For he that despyzeth not in hys herte to practise in his lyueynge, all the counsayles of Christe our maister and teachar: shall be numbred amonge the obstinate Jewes, for none of the flocke of Christ, because he heareth not his voice nor followeth him. Thus I make an ende

Wyshyng vnto you (most worthy counsaylours) ꝑ same spirit that in ꝑ primitiue church gaue vnto the multitude of beleuers, one herte Actu. 4.

one,

one mynde, & to eſteme nothyng of this worlde as theyr owne, miniſtrynge vnto euery one accordyng to his neceſſities. That you led by the ſame ſpirite, may at the leſt waye, ordeine ſuch a lawe that the oppreſſiō of the poꝛe reigne not freely amonge them that beare the name of chriſtians, But if they wyll be ſtyll oppreſſyng the poꝛe membꝛes of Chriſt after once oꝛ twyſe admoniciō: let them nomoꝛe be named chriſtians after Chriſt whom thei ſerue not, but Māmoniſtes after Māmon whoſe badge they beare. And this reformacion had, no doubt the mateſtie of God ſhal ſo appere in all your decres, þ none ſo wicked a creature ſhalbe foūde ſo bold as once to opē his mouth againſt the oꝛdꝛe that you ſhal take in al matters of religion. Yea the very enimies of Dauid ſhall do Omage vnto Solomō foꝛ his wiſdom. Al the kynges chriſtined ſhal learne at you to reforme theyr churches. You ſhalbe euen the light of al the worlde.

But if ye lette theſe thynges paſſe and regarde thē not: be ye ſure the Loꝛde ſhal confoūd your wiſdome. Inuent, Decre, Eſtabliſh and authoꝛiſe what you cā: al ſhal come to nought. The wayes that you ſhall inuent to eſtablyſhe vnitie and concoꝛd: ſhalbe the occacions of diſcoꝛde. The thynges wherby you ſhal thinke to wyn prayſe through al the worlde: ſhal tourne to your vtter ſhame, and the wayes þ you ſhall inuent to eſtablyſh a kyngdome: ſhalbe the vtter ſubuerciō of the ſame. The mercifull father of our Loꝛde Jeſus Chriſte, induce you wyth hys ſpirit, that you be not partakers of theſe plages.

AMEN

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